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EBIS

Foreign Broadcast Information Service

Newsletter

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FBIS NEWSLETTER

1 July 1983

Bureau Chiefs Conference

The annual Bureau Chiefs Conference was held the week of 18-22 April, with half the bureau chiefs arriving before and half after the formal sessions to accommodate individual appointments. In addition to Headquarters officers who brought the chiefs up to date on FBIS planning (notably the Modernization effort), several Agency officials addressed the conference. [] Director of Personnel, met with the chiefs in Key Building and reviewed the problems of recruitment, security, and the uncertain future of retirement policy which is now being debated on the Hill. During an afternoon session at Langley with the chiefs and senior FBIS managers, the Agency Comptroller Danny Childs gave a detailed briefing on the budget cycle and resource outlook. He was followed by the Deputy Director for Administration Harry Fitzwater who discussed the new building planned for Langley. The Deputy Director for Science and Technology R.E. Hineman reviewed the state of the directorate, among other issues touching on his views of PAR ratings and the importance of accurate evaluations in the search for the best people. Following the afternoon session, DCI William J. Casey and other Agency officials--including DDS&T office directors--joined FBIS officers and bureau chiefs at a cocktail-buffet in the Executive Dining Room. []

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Production Group Conference

A conference of Production Group managers was held at the Chamber of Commerce Building on 6 May. The D/FBIS and DD/FBIS discussed developments in FBIS management and Modernization Planning. Production Group division and branch chiefs spoke on their activities and concerns. A similar conference is expected to be held about every six months. Earlier this year the Analysis Group held a management conference, and FBIS bureau chiefs met 18-22 April in a Headquarters conference. []

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Coordination Meetings

The Director, FBIS and the Chief, Operations Group, FBIS met with officials of the BBC Monitoring Service at their annual policy coordination meeting, held this year in London. Like FBIS, the British service is embarking on a modernization program, with initial funding of 12 million pounds (approximately 18 million dollars). The British service is under pressure from the Foreign Office to provide a free-search computer capability as a result of a post-Falklands reevaluation of their intelligence process. []

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MIDAS News

Publications statistics for the Middle East & Africa and South Asia Daily Report volumes most accurately reflect developments since MIDAS became operational on 13 April. From a first week daily average of 41 pages, production for the two books rose to almost 74 pages a day by the fourth week. This figure translates into 96 typewritten pages, well above production prior to MIDAS. On 3 May, some 86 typeset (110 typewritten pages) were published with only a slight delay in delivery to the printing plant. []

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The Wire Service's output was also increased noticeably since MIDAS reflecting the fact that editors are more prone now to run textual material and longer multitake items. From a pre-MIDAS daily average of approximately 25,000 words, Wire output has jumped to over 30,000 words a day, peaking on 5 May at 59,000. The production increases on both the Daily Report and the Wire Service have not diluted the quality of the material being disseminated. Editors have been given more efficient tools to handle greater volumes of material, the result being that consumer offices are receiving more and better information. []

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[] has assumed the duties of MIDAS System Manager, vice [] who has resigned to take a position in private industry. []

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DDS&T Congratulatory Note

The following was received from the Deputy Director for Science and Technology:

"Congratulations to you for achieving an operational capability with Phase I MIDAS. It has been a long time coming I realize, but at last we have taken a major step in the modernization of FBIS. I was very pleased to be a part of the ribbon cutting ceremony the other day, and while I had the opportunity to actually cut the ribbon, I felt that there were many of your people that should have had a hand on the scissors. I was particularly pleased to see the attitude of those working with the system. They seemed to be very positive and forward-looking, which is exactly what is needed when we take on a new challenge and a new opportunity.

"I was pleased yesterday to see two daily reports that had been produced for the first time by MIDAS. They appeared to be quite an improvement over our previous product. It is going to be difficult to wait until the remaining six daily reports are produced by the system.

"Please convey my congratulations and thanks and the appreciation of Agency management to those who made this possible. Those employees in FBIS and ORD who worked together to enable the Agency to realize this capability deserve a large pat-on-the-back." []

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Watch Conferences

FBIS, which has extensive contacts with the operations centers in the government, will henceforth participate in the Washington Area Operations-Intelligence Centers conferences which are sponsored by the NIO/W. []

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Rule-Based Retrieval

Beginning in June, FBIS Analysis Group will be working with an Agency office in a concept test and evaluation of "rule-based information retrieval" (RUBRIC)--a full-text search system designed to surmount limitations inherent in conventional keyword-based systems. FBIS is one of several offices interested in research on RUBRIC, performed in FY 1982 by Advanced Information and Decision Systems in Mountain View, California, using material from the FBIS Wire Services. FBIS sees the rule-based retrieval approach as a promising enhancement of its projected AGFILE system for automated indexing, storage, and retrieval of media information. []

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FBIS' special interest stems from the inadequacy of keyword systems in retrieving statements dealing with intrinsically imprecise concepts. Passages in Soviet public discourse bearing on the concept of U.S.-Soviet strategic parity, for example, may use neither the word "strategic" nor the word "parity." The more sensitive the concept, the more likely that it will be addressed evasively in Soviet media. Searches for this type of material are critical to media analysis. []

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Rule-based retrieval allows the user to construct queries that define concepts based on logical relationships. For example, "terrorism" may be defined as a combination of a violent act or acts (explosion, assassination, kidnapping), an actor (Red Brigade, IRA), and a target (embassy, political figure). The user assigns weights to the rules, enabling the system to rank items in order of predicted relevance to the user's interests. The user may ask the system which rules were used in selecting an item and may then adjust the rules to refine the retrieval process. []

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FBIS Analysis Group's PASKEY system, which affords computer storage and retrieval of Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean statements in some 600 thematic categories, will be used as a control in an 18-month test and evaluation of RUBRIC. FBIS will provide up to 1,000 media items relevant to themes and topics of interest. Analysts will work with the contractor to develop and refine rules for search. RUBRIC's success in retrieving items based on those rules can then be tested against the results of human coding in PASKEY. []

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Language Services

For the 6 months period November through April, FBIS language officers from Production Group spent 586 days on overseas TDY, 45% of which was in the Spanish-language area, and 64% in support of an Agency component. 25X1

USSR Press Note

USSR Division's surveyed 26 articles in the Soviet press on alcoholism over the past year and reported her findings in a Press Note dated 27 May 1983: "USSR: Doctors Campaign Against Alcoholism." The survey concluded that there is significant concern in Soviet society over alcoholism, mortality due to alcoholism and the alcoholic personality. 25X1

Schaufelberger Investigation

Panama Bureau provided the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador with texts of Salvadoran clandestine rebel radio broadcasts in support of the State Department's investigation into the death of Lt. Commander Schaufelberger. Also in support of the investigation, Analysis Group examined the rhetoric of these radios over a three-month period at the request of the embassy and the department's Threat Analysis Group. 25X1

BBC Use of FBIS Material

BBC congratulated Abidjan Bureau for its work in covering the abortive coup in Ghana. "Due to the bureau's coverage, the Newsburo was able to say with obvious satisfaction that BBC was the only source of reports on the Ghanaian developments for some two to three hours on 19 June." The seizure of Ghana's national radio by rebel troops--the initial indication of the coup attempt--was reported by the Abidjan Bureau an hour and a half before the first Western media report on the development. A NOIWON was issued based on FBIS reporting. 25X1

According to BBC, the Foreign and Commonwealth office has now commented that the FBIS reports on Latin America are "timely, often the first information we have of new developments in a particular area, and often much of the material does not subsequently appear elsewhere." The Falkland Island Department especially noted that it "continues to find additional material on the southern region very helpful." 25X1

From the Washington POST, 7 May 1983

Are Those Andropov's Words—or the Translator's?

All too often ignorance of the mechanics of translation may lead journalists or political observers to speculate naively on the political import of the translation of a speech by Yuri Andropov with the same freedom that they speculate on a Reagan speech in their own press. Such speculation is often without foundation.

For example, in response to President Reagan's recent charge that the Soviet Union was continuing to deploy SS20 missiles in Europe, Andropov charged that Reagan was telling a "deliberate untruth" (*zavedomaya nepravda*). However, the Tass English version translated the Andropov phrase as "deliberate lie." Washington Post reporter Dusko Doder emphasized [March 27] the fact that the Tass English version differed from the version published in Russian in Pravda: "It is extremely unlikely that the Tass English translation of the leader's remarks was inaccurate. Political observers here believe the word 'lie' was deliberately used for foreign audiences while the somewhat more neutral word 'nepravda' is used in the Russian media."

Those political observers notwithstanding, Doder is going too far when he ascribes such political weight to the Tass translation. It was not "extremely unlikely" that the translation of the word "lie" for "untruth" was a mistake. Translators sometimes incorrectly choose what they regard as a conceptual equivalent and ignore stylistic niceties. Not being journalists or litterateurs, who make their living by assembling words in clever patterns resplendent with refracted meaning, translators are not always as sensitive as they should be to nuance or tone. Nor are they infallibly attuned to the "cultural weight" attached to synonyms in the foreign

language. To the average translator, the difference between "lie" and "untruth" is generally arbitrary.

To complicate the matter further, the higher the output of the translator, the more likely the possibility of lapses in quality. A translator who routinely delivers 100,000 words of translation a month is bound to have at least 5 percent error. That 5 percent may conceivably fall in a most inconvenient place—as in an Andropov speech. It is not gross mistranslation that we are talking about here but the kind of insensitivity to nuance that can pique a journalist's—or a political observer's—fancy.

In a similar vein, not long ago, Murrey Marder enlarged upon the import of Andropov's alleged adoption of American sporting terminology in a speech on the occasion of the U.S.S.R.'s 60th anniversary. According to Marder:

"For the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, it was a provocative choice of words:

"The ball is now in the court of the U.S.A."

"Yuri V. Andropov may well have used that phrase from our sporting world as a warning that he means to play his end of the superpower game with a cunning appreciation of Western prejudices and perceptions. He certainly intended more than the usual meaning."

A look at the original Pravda article, however, shows that Andropov did not say that "the ball is now in the court of the U.S.A." What he said was, "In a word, it is now up to the U.S.A. to respond" (*Slovom, seychas otvet za SShA*). The Tass translator (could he or she have been flourishing an idiomatic command of English?) chose conceptually equivalent but stylistically inequivalent Amer-

ican slang to convey Andropov's meaning. I submit that the Russian translator never intended the semantic load that Marder mined from that simple substitution. The translator conveyed content and ignored form—unfortunately, a fairly frequent occurrence.

A similar error was made by an American translator of a speech by Leonid Brezhnev. Brezhnev used the word "fable" (*nebylitsa*). However, instead of the neutral word "fable," the translator chose "cock-and-bull story" as his translation. Although the Oxford Russian-English dictionary lists "cock-and-bull story" as a possible meaning for the Russian word, this word choice imparted to Brezhnev's speech a breezy quality (rather more reminiscent of Brezhnev's colorful predecessor) that simply was not present in the original text.

That both American and Russian translators make such errors is at times inescapable, given the fact that most of them do not have the advantage of polishing their semantic awareness through extensive travel and residence in each other's country.

The point of these examples is that journalists or political observers who think they can operate at the same sophisticated level of linguistic analysis on the basis of translations or with absolute faith in translators are quite mistaken. Before sinister meaning is read into Andropov's choice of words, the commentator must determine whose words are being analyzed—Andropov's or the translator's.

—Maureen E. Cote

The writer is a translator-editor at U.S. Joint Publications Research Service.

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Support to ACIS, SHAPE

All 11 April memorandum from Chief, Arms Control Intelligence Staff (ACIS), to C/AG asked for assistance in responding to a request from Ambassador Dailey's Public Policy Group (set up to coordinate U.S. public diplomacy on INF issues) for a memorandum clarifying the record on Soviet willingness to enter INF negotiations in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Analysis Group's [] prepared a brief review of the evidence, with supporting documentation in an appendix, that suggested NATO movement toward a decision to deploy medium-range missiles in 1979 was instrumental in bringing the USSR to the negotiating table. Five copies of the report, a Special Memorandum titled 'Moscow's Approach to Opening INF Negotiations,' were sent to ACIS on 14 April. The Deputy Chief, ACIS, obtained 20 additional copies to pass to the working group and to the U.S. INF delegation. []

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Remote Communications

The destruction of a microwave ground station in El Salvador by rebel forces on 5 June disrupted portions of telephone communications in Central America. This, in turn, temporarily hampered FBIS Panama Bureau's ability to monitor medium wave radios in El Salvador and Guatemala via the bureau's remote monitoring system which utilizes dedicated international telephone circuits to relay radio signals from remote receivers to the bureau in Panama City. []

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Videotape Selections

Field bureaus filed a total of 1,399 videolists during calendar year 1982. Some 828 tapes were ordered by consumers. Breakdown per bureau is as follows:

	No. of VLS's Filed	No. of Tapes Requested
AUSTRIAN	298	152
BANGKOK	-	-
COLOGNE UNIT	26	23
GULF	13	12
HONG KONG	322	98
JORDAN	17	13
KEY WEST	27	22
LONDON	308	197
NICOSIA	60	31
OKINAWA	129	123
PANAMA	4	4
PARAGUAY	72	62
SEOUL	123	91

Videolists filed between January-April 1983 have totaled 455; some 278 tapes have been ordered by consumers thus far. []

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Special Awards

The Career Intelligence Medal was awarded to [] and [] ceremonies in recognition of their career contributions. [] was awarded the Certificate of Distinction for her long career in the Agency. []

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Federal Women's Program Board

Production Group's [] were selected to serve 1-year tours as Directorate representatives to the Federal Women's Program Board, succeeding [] who completed a two-year term on the board. [] is also in Production Group.

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The board acts as an advisory panel to the Federal Women's Program Manager, the Director of EEO, or the Director, Deputy Director, and Executive Director of the Agency on policies and practices which enhance the utilization, development, and advancement of women in the Agency. The board can identify barriers for women in achieving these goals and can recommend corrective action. An annual report on its activities is submitted to the Federal Women's Program Manager. []

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Retirement System Changes

The Agency has worked closely with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to ensure that the retirement program needs of Agency employees are understood when and if proposed changes are presented to the Congress. Briefings have been conducted for Congressional staff members, and memoranda have been forwarded providing detailed information. The Director has discussed his concerns with the President and key Congressional and Administration officials. []

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West Coast Reunion

The second annual reunion of FBIS West Coast retirees will be held this year on 1 October in Santa Rosa, California. Since many of the offspring of those who served in FBIS at one time or another have expressed interest in participating, [] have volunteered to organize a "second generation group." Those interested in attending the Reunion should contact [] Their addresses and phone numbers are available in LRB. []

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